

# IRELAND

## FIVE CENTURIES OF HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE

### a. AN ARMCHAIR TOUR OF DUBLIN

Dublin is a city which has undergone a huge renaissance of its culture with an influx of returning Irish migrants. Our visit begins with at historic Trinity College and examination of pages from the Book of Kells and explains how you can stay here cheaply in summer since the 'Celtic tiger economy' means that Dublin is no longer cheap to stay although the quality of the food is now excellent. We visit the historic Four Courts, site of the Easter uprising, watch the burning of the Customs House during the 'Troubles' and see its restoration, and make an armchair tour of Ireland's magnificent and newly extended National Gallery.

This is a 3 or a 4 hour course designed to reveal the magic of Ireland which draws all those with Irish blood like a magnet. We examine the great riches of Irish architecture, the complex history of Ireland with an emphasis on the mass emigrations to America and Australia during the famine period and its aftermath.

### b. IRELAND, FIVE CENTURIES OF HISTORY

This lecture opens with photos of the great forts of the Bronze and Iron Age where rich finds of e buried Celtic gold unearthed recently are now in the Museum of Ireland. Many of these Bronze Age forts have underground passageways, the cranachs built on islands in the lakes containing small wooden huts and evidence of religious beliefs and rituals seen in the stone heads at Fermanagh and other areas which were disregarded or subsumed after the arrival of Christianity and the rise of the great monastic establishments. The Vikings arrived in 795 AD with new ideas and established a base in what is now Dublin. Then came the Normans and their great castles around the area known as the Pale and Ireland's holy places and monastic settlements. We



CELTIC CROSS (ROSCREA MUSEUM)



DUBLIN CASTLE



ROSCREA (TIPPERARY) NORMAN ARCH

see how the average Irishmen and women lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in the reconstructed village at Omagh's Museum of Emigration and the 'coffin ship's on which so many migrants died en route to Canada and America. We see the rise of the population and the potato blight and the deaths of over a million of the Irish, the largest loss of life in nineteenth century Europe and the ineffective measures taken by the British government to counteract it and the efforts of the Quakers to establish soup kitchens. We look at the bitterness engendered, the troubles and the Easter uprising and effects of mass migration on the Celtic language and today's renewal of interest in Irish culture in a nation which has become the thriving 'Celtic tiger' which those who forced to emigrate to America Britain and Australia could never have imagined.

### c. CASTLES AND GEORGIAN HOUSES OF IRELAND

This armchair tour provides a visual feast of Ireland's finest homes and gardens, some open to the public, some privately owned. We learn their history and architecture, the personalities who built them, examine the magnificent plasterwork done by imported Irish stuccadores and see the great art treasures like the Velasquez portraits and the great Velasquez and other Italian paintings stolen twice from the Beit Collection at magnificent *Russborough*, not once but three times. We visit Lismore Castle, Fota House near Cork,, *Castleward*, now the property of the National Trust and *Annaghmakerrig*, now the Tyrone Guthrie Arts Centre, once the home of the great Shakespearean director. At romantic *Lissadel* where Yeats was enchanted by the beauty of the two daughters one of whom would become an Irish rebel, go inside the magnificently restored Ashford Castle Hotel at Cong, County Mayo, enlarged by the Guinness beer brewing fortune and now Ireland's premier hotel, see the headquarters of the Irish Georgian society at *Castletown* and the great Dublin homes that line historic St Stephens Green.



SHERIFF'S COURT COUNTY DOWN



STATUE OF ST. MARGARET COUNTY DOWN



GAZEBO - HISTORICAL PART OF COUNTY DOWN



GARDEN - FOTA HOUSE NEAR CORK



CASTLE COUNTY MAYO